
Three quarters of radio listening is via a digital platform

Digital Migration working group publishes half-yearly report on radio use

Bern, 25 August 2022 – Digital radio in Switzerland has now become established in all language regions and age groups, with DAB+ and the internet accounting for three quarters of all radio listening. Young people listen more to IP radio, while older listeners prefer DAB+. For every 100 minutes of radio listened to in the car, 62 are transmitted digitally.

In spring 2022, radio listeners used digital platforms for an average of 75 out of 100 minutes of radio every day. Digital radio use has jumped significantly in recent years, from 49% in autumn 2015 to 75% last spring. Meanwhile, FM use has halved over the same period, dropping from 51% to 25%. Listening to the radio online accounts for around one third of radio listening, while DAB+ at 41% has clearly become the most popular digital radio technology in Switzerland.

Digitalisation progressing among mixed listeners

The switch to digital radio is quite widespread and seems to be reaching a high plateau: the figures reported match those of the previous period (autumn 2021) for the first time since the survey began. This phenomenon is especially noticeable in German-speaking Switzerland, where digital radio has reached the highest proportion of listeners. In French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland, on the other hand, digital radio still made modest gains. Despite the steady number of FM-only listeners, digitalisation continues to make progress. For example, among people who previously reported listening to both digital and FM radio, more are listening exclusively to digital radio (43%) than still listening to both (31%). There remains a group of listeners who only use FM radio (13%).

IP radio popular among young people

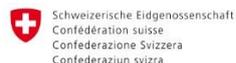
Digital radio now accounts for at least around 70% of use in each age group. Digital migration is most advanced among 15- to 34-year-olds, at 82% of use; the internet is the most popular platform among this cohort, who are the youngest users surveyed, with 44% of digital radio use. Digital radio accounts for 77% of total radio use among listeners aged 35 to 54, with 40% via IP radio and 37% DAB+. For those 55 and over, 70% of their listening is digital – and almost half of this time is spent using a DAB+ device (46%).

Digital radio use in cars continues to grow

Most radio listening takes place at home – 64% of all radio use. DAB+ is the most popular technology (40%), followed by IP radio (36%). Some 18% of radio listening takes place at work: 44% via DAB+, 36% on the internet and 21% on FM. Digital platforms thus now account for 80% of all radio listening at the workplace. Digital radio has made clear progress in cars (12% of overall radio listening). The highest proportion of radio use in cars is via DAB+ (51% of overall listening in cars) which, taken together with the 11% for internet listening, brings digital radio to a total of 62% of radio use in cars.

6 million threshold exceeded

According to the GfK survey, sales of DAB+ radios declined slightly in the first half of 2022 to around 250,000 units. However, a total of 6.25 million radios have been sold since 2000, or 1.8 radios per household. The fact that practically all new cars are now equipped with a DAB+ radio as standard bodes well for the future of the digital migration.



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Digital Migration working group (WG DigiMig)

In spring 2013, the radio industry together with the Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) formed the Digital Migration working group (WG DigiMig). The working group includes representatives from the Swiss Association of Private Radio Stations (VSP), the Union Romande des Radios Régionales (RRR), the Union of Non-Profit Local Radio Stations (Unikom), as well as SRG SSR and the multiplex operators. In Switzerland, digital radio is set to replace analogue FM broadcasting by 2024 at the latest. In late 2014, AG DigiMig presented the Federal Council with a scenario for the switchover from analogue to digital. The SRG and most private radio stations already broadcast their radio programmes via DAB+ in parallel with FM, some exclusively digitally. Since autumn 2015, GfK Switzerland has conducted a half-yearly survey of radio usage by distribution channel in Switzerland on behalf of the Digital Migration working group.

FM transmitters to be switched off at the end of 2024

Swiss radio broadcasters have decided to cease FM broadcasting on 31 December 2024. The Federal Council has left it up to the radio industry to organise the digital switchover autonomously within a time frame of several years. OFCOM has adopted the switch-off plan decided by the industry as a binding obligation and will not renew the FM radio licences after they expire on 31 December 2024.

The advantages of DAB+

The digital broadcasting technology DAB+ has significant advantages over FM. There is a much wider range of stations throughout Switzerland than with FM. At the same time, with up to 18 radio stations per transmission frequency, overall energy consumption is much lower. In many places in Switzerland, DAB+ radio already provides better audio quality and less interference than with FM. A DAB+ radio can receive stations practically everywhere with an antenna. It does not need an internet connection and, unlike online reception, cannot be monitored.

Further information

The presentation of the radio usage figures is available on the OFCOM website at:

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